

November 7, 2009

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11) released the following statement and information in response to today's passage of the Affordable Health Care for America Act.

"Over the past months, thousands of people have offered me their thoughts and ideas on health care reform. I've held public forums with hundreds of attendees and met with many families, small business owners, seniors, veterans, patients, doctors and nurses in our community. The people who I've met or who have called, written, or emailed me have offered a wide variety of ideas to consider as I read the legislation. I deeply appreciate all of their input, from the personal stories to the tough questions.

"I've heard again and again from people in our community who are having trouble making ends meet because of the cost of health care. As a former self-employed small business owner, I've personally experienced the effect of rising health care costs and the burden these costs place on our families and small businesses. For decades, people all across our country have struggled to pay for health care. Today, we took an important step towards making health care more affordable for American families and putting our nation back on the path to long-term economic prosperity.

"Reforming health care is a fiscally responsible course of action that will build on the best of the American system by making sure people can keep their current insurance if they like it and choose what doctors they want see. Our action today will reduce the growth of health care costs by creating a transparent and competitive health insurance market and cracking down on waste, fraud and abuse. It will improve benefits and quality of care for seniors, help small businesses to stay open and operating, and stop insurance companies from denying coverage for pre-existing conditions or kicking sick people off their plans. And, because of a bi-partisan amendment I authored, we will provide immediate economic relief by making it easier for children to access health care if one of their parents loses coverage."

The Affordable Health Care for America Act – What it Means for California Families

Health care costs continue to spiral out of control, hurting families and small businesses on a daily basis. Bringing down health care costs will strengthen America's long-term economic security and make sure that Americans can afford quality health care. The Affordable Health Care for America Act will reduce health care costs for families and small businesses and make sure Americans keep their current coverage if they like it and choose the doctors they want to see. The Affordable Health Care for America Act is fiscally responsible, and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that this legislation will cut the federal deficit by more than \$100 billion over the next decade.

Protecting Patients, Families, and Seniors:

- Guarantees that people who are happy with their coverage can keep their current plan
- Limits and caps annual out-of-pocket costs for individuals and families so that nobody goes bankrupt due to a medical condition
- Prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage to people with a pre-existing condition like diabetes and prevents insurance companies from kicking patients off a plan if they get sick
- Benefits every person in California's 11th district with private health insurance – more than 500,000 people – through these common-sense consumer protections
- Protects veterans' health care – TRICARE, TRICARE for Life, and VA benefits are fully preserved

Controlling Costs:

- Harnesses the power of competition and transparency by creating an improved health care market – called an “exchange” – where consumers and small businesses owners can compare and purchase high quality, affordable health care plans
- Allows Americans to purchase a 100 percent voluntary, publicly-administered health plan that will compete on the open market, increasing competition and lowering costs across the board
- Provides for negotiated drug prices to lower the amount consumers pay for the medicines they need
- Restricts health insurance companies from unfairly raising premiums and sets standards to guarantee that premiums pay for medical services – not to pad insurance company profits

Guaranteeing Consumer Choice and Expanding Coverage:

- Creates new tax credits to help small business owners offer health coverage to their employees – 12,300 small businesses in the 11th district are expected to qualify for these credits
- Provides assistance – called affordability credits – to help qualifying families and individuals purchase health insurance
- Improves consumer choice for everyone and will help provide coverage for 43,000 uninsured people in California's 11th district

Improving Medicare for California Seniors:

- Eliminates the prescription drug 'donut hole' for the 10,700 seniors each year in California's 11th district that are affected and improves benefits
- Protects seniors by cracking down on fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare
- Eliminates out-of-pocket expenses for preventative services like cancer or heart screenings

Bringing the Next Generation of Medical Professionals to California:

- Provides incentives for physicians and nurses to train and practice in underserved areas – bringing more doctors and medical professionals to our community
- Encourages doctors to become primary care physicians – the people who are the first lines of defense treating patients and preventing diseases

Fiscal Responsibility:

- Reduces the deficit by more than \$100 billion over the next 10 years and is fully paid for
- Eliminates wasteful spending in health programs
- Increases efficiency through more use of health information technology and safe, secure electronic medical records
- Emphasizes prevention and wellness to keep Americans from getting sick